

The staff at "RAZUM" (Development of Managerial Thinking), the local branch of the Leningrad sociological scientific research centre, recently carried out a survey of Murmansk residents to find out what they felt about the atomic fleet. Of those surveyed, 88.1 percent believe that it affects the ecology and people's health to one degree or another. Out of nine ecologically harmful factors, the people were asked to choose the three they considered the worst. The result was that the atomic fleet came second in this dubious company. The only factor which the people of Murmansk considered to be more harmful was air pollution by motor vehicles. Considered less harmful was damage due to the lack of sewage treatment facilities in the city, as well as damage caused by the activities of industrial enterprises, broiler houses, cars of apatite concentrate which fill the air with dust daily on the way to the commercial port, and many other things that are rife in an industrial centre.

Why are the townsfolk so afraid of the peaceful atom?

The results of this first study of public opinion led to specific reflections first of all by the organizers of the survey themselves. Here is the view of V. Mararitsy, "RAZUM" director and consultant to the Murmansk Oblast Committee of the CPSU:

"The people's fear is due to ignorance. Here are some more data on the results of the survey: 34.1 percent of the people in Murmansk are convinced that nuclear-powered vessels are sources of increased radioactivity; 17.8 percent believe that there is a potential danger and that there could be a new Chernobyl' in the event of an accident: only about 12 percent of those surveyed deny the baneful influence of the atomic fleet. Imagine, people claim to be sure that there is increased radiation in the city but no one can explain where it comes from. Moreover, 64.2 percent of those surveyed clearly stated that they did not have enough knowledge themselves to assess the radiation situation.